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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Mar. 24, 2022

Even though the Internal Revenue Service issues most refunds in less than 21 days for taxpayers who filed electronically and chose direct deposit, some refunds may take longer.

Many different factors can affect the timing of a refund after the IRS receives a return. A manual review may be necessary when a return has errors, is incomplete or is affected by identity theft or fraud.

Other returns can also take longer to process, including when a return needs a

The IRS cautions taxpayers not to rely on receiving a refund by a certain date, especially when making major purchases or paying bills. Some returns may require additional review and may take longer. Also, remember to take into consideration the time it takes for a financial institution to post the refund to an account or to receive it by mail.

To check the status of a refund, taxpayers should use the Where's My Refund? tool on IRS.gov. Information for the most current tax year filed is generally available within 24 hours after the IRS acknowledges receipt of a taxpayer's e-filed return. If they filed a paper return, taxpayers should allow four weeks before checking the status.

The IRS will contact taxpayers by mail when more information is needed to process a return. IRS phone and walk-in representatives can only research the status of a refund if it has been:

- 21 days or more since it was filed electronically (or since the IRS filing season start date – whichever is later),
- Six weeks or more since a return was mailed , or when
- Where's My Refund? tells the taxpayer to contact the IRS.

Before filing a return, taxpayers should make IRS.gov their first stop to find online tools to help get the information they need to file. The tools are easy-to-use and available anytime. Millions of people use them to help file and pay taxes, find information about their accounts, get answers to tax questions and get tips on filing a return.

2020 tax returns

Still waiting on a 2020 tax return to be processed? The IRS expects to be caught up this year, but people whose tax returns from 2020 have not yet been processed

should still file their 2021 tax returns by the April due date or request an extension

Income (AGI) or prior-year Self-Select PIN (SSP). Those who electronically filed last year may have created a five digit Self-Select PIN to use as their electronic signature. Generally, tax software automatically enters the information for returning customers. Taxpayers who are using a software product for the first time may have to enter this information.

Taxpayers should review the special instructions to validate an electronically filed 2021 tax return if their 2020 return has not been processed or they used the Non-Filers tool in 2021 to register for an advance Child Tax Credit payment or third Economic Impact Payment in 2021.

Income Tax • IRS

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